

# Executive Summary and Recommendations

## Introduction

Ipsos MORI were commissioned by The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) in June 2014 to undertake the ex-post evaluation of the multiannual Work Programme 2009-2012. The study objective was to gather reliable evidence about Eurofound's performance during the completed programme period 2009-2012, as well as to provide input to improve Eurofound's capacity to implement its current four year programme.

Eurofound is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75 to contribute to the planning and design of better living and working conditions in Europe. Eurofound's role is to provide information, advice and expertise – on living and working conditions, industrial relations and managing change in Europe – for key actors in the field of EU social policy on the basis of comparative information, research and analysis.

The evaluation aimed to answer specific evaluation questions that were developed by Eurofound's Evaluation function, published in the Evaluation Mandate, and approved by the Evaluation Steering Group. The scope of the study was restricted to activities within 2009-2012 period but acknowledges that their impact would have taken place also in the following two years.

The evaluation team designed a methodological approach to cover all thirteen evaluation questions, organised under three evaluation areas of Eurofound's mission, Programme Focus, and Operational Framework. These questions were designed to meet the operational needs of the Agency and covered all main evaluation criteria set out by the evaluation guidelines of the European Commission.

The evaluation approach combined a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. These comprised of 13 staff consultations, 49 interviews with stakeholders and wider user groups, a user survey with 244 responses, three workshops with the Governing Board groups and a voting session with the whole Governing Board. Triangulation of this primary evidence was complemented by an extensive review of internal documents including internal guidelines and project evaluations and monitoring information including internal databases of impacts and policy hotspots. Evaluation tools applied in the study included contribution analysis, cost effectiveness analysis and programme logic development. The logic model was discussed in the Governing Board workshops and in numerous iterations with Eurofound Evaluation Steering group. The evaluation also drew on six project level case studies. The case study selection process used several data collection strands to construct a long list of 18 potential candidates in order to cover projects in variety of sizes, research units and methods. The main objective of the case studies was to highlight the ways in which each project was successful or not in translating into policy impact and identify factors that enable it.

Despite the comprehensiveness of the approach, there were certain limitations with originating in interviewing those closer to the Agency's governance processes or involved in the wider consultations that Eurofound conducts during Work Programme development and in the way the budgeting information was organised during the 2009-2012 period. These limitations were taken into consideration when forming evidence-based conclusions.

## Key findings:

Below we set our key findings in line with the three evaluation areas, first in a form of a table summarising Eurofound's performance in that with the assessment of the level of a need for improvement and then in form of a narrative assessment.

### Eurofound's Mission

1. Eurofound's mission	Result of the assessment	Need for improvement
To what extent are Eurofound's 'intervention logic', activities and choices grounded in its mandate, and in line with the needs of socio-economic policy-makers and stakeholders?	The intervention logic, activities and choices were <b>fully in line</b> with the needs of socio-economic policymakers and stakeholders consulted within this evaluation.	<b>None</b>
Why does Eurofound do what Eurofound does?"	Eurofound does what it does because its original mandate and mission be the provider of unique information has been <b>confirmed to be valid</b> in ex ante evaluations. Stakeholders generally shared the perception of this quality.	<b>None</b>
What is the unique added value of Eurofound?	There is a strong general view that the Agency has a role in informing and contributing towards better evidence-based policymaking in areas relevant to living and working conditions. The one most important characteristic varies based on consulted group but <b>European coverage</b> and <b>reliability of data</b> stand out.	<b>None</b>
To what extent do Eurofound's activities and outputs contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments?	Evidence gathered within the evaluation suggests that Eurofound's projects to a large extent contributed to policy developments in some way (see below). The <b>complexities in the policymaking process prevented establishment of a direct link</b> between research and policy change.	<b>Small</b>
By which means? [Contribution to impact assessments, preparation of new proposals, quotation by official reports, quotation in scientific papers, etc.?]	Users indicated that the most frequent means for contributing to policy developments is through <b>preparation of policy proposals</b> and <b>contributions to policy impact assessments</b> . The majority of Governing Board members confirmed that in their view the most important means by which Eurofound contributed to relevant socio-economic policy development was <b>informing policy debate by providing background and contextual knowledge</b> .	<b>Small</b>

Eurofound staff have developed a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the various stakeholder and user groups that the Agency targets. Stakeholders can be split into four distinct user categories moving along the influence/power continuum from those with the least direct influence on policy developments to those heavily involved in drafting new policies on EU and national levels. This strategic knowledge held by Eurofound staff, in combination with the early determination of the high level priorities and a process of extensive internal and external consultation resulted in a high alignment of the Work Programme with the needs of the Agency's stakeholders.

Involvement of employers, workers, national governments, and the European Commission ensures the relevance of the Work Programme to these groups of stakeholders. Indirectly represented organisations were satisfied with Agency's activities being aligned to their needs. There was a general consensus among the consulted stakeholders that some projects were more aligned with the needs of one of the groups than others and therefore by nature none of the groups could be fully satisfied and that compromise was necessary. Stakeholders who could comment on this issue acknowledged that this is an

acceptable consequence of a tripartite system and commented that all projects were, however, undertaken professionally and to the highest quality.

Some specific remarks on the alignment with stakeholder needs were voiced by members of the tripartite groups during the stakeholder workshops. For example, the Government representatives indicated a high level of alignment with needs signified by the fact that a number of Governing Board members use Eurofound's research in advising Ministers at national levels and the workers highlighted that the factual research produced by Eurofound perhaps aligns better to their needs than evaluative projects – since providing a judgement potentially politicises the issue.

### Why does Eurofound do what Eurofound does?

Eurofound's mission and rationale for existence is deeply grounded in its original mandate of 1975. This relevance was confirmed in the ex-ante evaluation of 2008 by conducting a problem analysis. The exercise recognised that the Agency has built up a substantial body of knowledge in the field of living and working conditions in Europe. The most recent ex-ante evaluation, undertaken in 2012, went further by stating that the current mission 'to provide knowledge to assist in the development of social and work-related policies' effectively became the new reference point to interpret Eurofound's mandate. From this assessment it can be concluded that throughout the period 2009-2012 Eurofound did what it did because it had proven to be a unique information provider in its field of operation.

Eurofound has throughout the period in question made extensive efforts to ensure that it remains relevant and listens to its key stakeholders and primary target groups which are well defined and link to the original communications strategy from 2006. There were strategic changes made to the way in which the Agency chose to deliver and communicate the results from its work over this work programming period. Of particular note this included: reducing the number of publications per project (from 7.8 in 2009 to 2.5 in 2012), restructuring the research units, and increasing the in-house research capabilities so that more of the project delivery could be in-sourced. In-sourcing of research was considered by governing board representatives and Eurofound staff to have positive effects on Eurofound's ability to deliver high quality research. In the final two years of the Work Programme the Agency received increases in the user satisfaction ratings which would, despite slight changes in the methodology of user satisfaction surveys<sup>1</sup>, indicate that these changes may have had a positive impact in this regard.

### What is the unique added value of Eurofound?

The Agency is seen to provide a unique added value for its key stakeholders who see its main strength in the provision of European coverage, and reliability of trend data. As such it is seen as a trusted source with a tripartite governance structure. All consulted parties; some closer to the Agency's governance structures and some as irregular users, have seen value in Eurofound's research.

### To what extent do Eurofound's activities and outputs contribute to relevant socio-economic policy developments? By which means?

A vast majority of those who are close to the policymaking process<sup>2</sup> indicated that the data and information that the Agency produces is invaluable background and contextual information, while some of them were also able to point out specific examples of how this information fed into the policy development process. For example, one member state representative stated that Eurofound research

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2013 the online questionnaire underwent a restructure of the format and content revision in order to increase low response rate, introducing questions about the overall usage of Eurofound publications (rather than just frequency of usage), preferred format of publications, publications of principle importance, and information providers most often used.

<sup>2</sup> Those that have a directly impact on policy development, i.e. respondents with the following roles: Advising on policy, Shaping policy and Advocacy and lobbying

was useful as background information for better informed policies when drafting proposals for new programmes or initiatives. It was highlighted by policymakers themselves that this process is long and complex and in order for the policies to be informed by evidence – produced by Eurofound – a number of factors need to be present. The most important factor is the alignment of the timing of the relevant research outputs and the political agenda, the latter outside the control of the Agency. This limitation has been explored to a great depth in interviews and case studies that indicate the variety of means through which Eurofound feeds into the policymaking process but the actual attribution of a causal link is very difficult to prove as events behind the drafting and approval of a particular policy are challenging to unpick. Evidence of what makes a project have a direct policy impact gathered from the case studies is summarised in the Text box following the Executive Summary.

## Programme Focus

2. Programme Focus	Result of the assessment	Need for improvement
To what extent do Eurofound's activities / outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers, and EU social partners?	The extensive <b>consultation process</b> and wide <b>representation</b> of key stakeholders in governance of the Agency <b>translates into highly relevant projects</b> . Those <b>projects</b> which were <b>considered not to be contentious by the Governing Board</b> had a <b>more clearly specified objectives and scope</b> .	None
Flexibility and responsiveness to change: How responsive has Eurofound been to unforeseen changes arising notably from the economic and financial crisis during the programming period?	<b>Annual Work programme design and approval process</b> had some flexibility built into it in order to address challenges faced by Europe posed by the economic crisis. Eurofound's Governing Board assessed the shift in a programme focus but decided to address it by incremental changes to existing projects. The majority of <b>users</b> indicated that Eurofound was responsive and the majority of <b>stakeholders did not identify it as a problem</b> .	Small
Gaps / priorities not covered	Portfolio of projects selected by the Governing Board ensured high level of coverage of priorities of socio-economic policymakers and social partners. <b>Advisory Committees kept close oversight</b> over implementation of planned activities. <b>Refocusing on crisis</b> in the last two years, and <b>avoiding overlaps with EU OSHA</b> might have resulted in gaps.	Small
How does the Work Programme preparation (consultation of stakeholders, process etc.) ensure that Eurofound activities/outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers and EU social partners?	<b>Work Programme development cycle</b> is an <b>effective and mature process</b> that began over a year prior to final discussions and approval of the draft programme by the Agency's governing board. Stakeholders felt that they were consulted and that their priorities have been reflected in the Work Programme. Individual stakeholders could point at specific projects that addressed their direct needs.	None
To what extent did Eurofound fulfil the expectations set out in the programming in relation to:		
Matching the areas of expertise with the challenges, orientation and topics that were selected and implemented (were there gaps, did they meet the needs of those Eurofound wanted to serve)	The <b>internal oversight procedures ensured</b> that all approved projects are executed and highlight any problems in execution once encountered. Data stored in the project management system does not allow assessment of which projects did not result in outputs.	Small
Methods (methodology, quality assurance, etc)	Eurofound implemented <b>tried and tested methods</b> and <b>continued strengthening in-house research capability</b> . <b>Standard quality assurance practices in place</b> however ensuring <b>quality</b> input from <b>national correspondents</b> a <b>challenge</b> for research managers.	Moderate
Communication strategy (target groups (people), products, placement)	<b>Established and well thought out communication channels</b> . Several <b>improvements and innovative approaches</b> to presenting information took place	None

throughout the period.

In terms of filling knowledge gaps and synergies, to what extent does Eurofound's research take account of and builds on previous / existing research?

Eurofound research to a **large extent built on existing research**. There were numerous examples of two way **flow of knowledge** to/from **academic partners**. During the period there were opportunities for more **formal collaboration with other EU agencies**.

**Small**

To what extent do Eurofound's activities / outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers, and EU social partners?

Eurofound's programme focus during this period reflected the priorities of EU socio-economic policymakers and EU social partners to a large extent, especially taking into account the differences between these various groups. Some of the groups, in particular the workers, indicated that they would have preferred the balance of activities to focus on one of the three research areas<sup>3</sup> more than others, but there was a general sense of satisfaction with the focus of the 4 year and annual Work Programmes due to the high level of involvement of all groups in the theme and project selection processes. The workers group by nature tends to be most interested in research on industrial relations related topics whereas the government representatives are most interested in findings relating to effectiveness of policies in improvement of living and working conditions.

**Flexibility and responsiveness to change: How responsive has Eurofound been to unforeseen changes arising notably from the economic and financial crisis during the programming period?**

Evidence from both staff and stakeholder interviews indicated that the wide audience involved in the Work Programme design however resulted in a marginally slower response to the economic crisis, especially if measured by introduction of specific topical projects. The general focus of the programme allowed flexibility in the annual Work Programmes to respond to topical issues but the rigidity in the system (structures involving 78 governing board members from all EU member states) was seen to not allow for this to an optimal level. Some efforts on existing project levels were made in the first year of the Work Programme (for example the European Jobs Monitor had an amended methodology to measure the effect of crisis on jobs and to analyse structural shifts on employment in Europe) but specific projects targeted at the effect of crisis on living and working conditions were not set up as quickly as they could have been. There is not too much flexibility built in beyond the annual Work Programme development and a limited budget for the stakeholder enquiry service. There are clearly inherent risks in both extremes – having in place a system dedicating too much of the budget to 'arising topics' or being too rigid. The challenge is to increase the flexibility within the existing official processes for Work Programme development and approval which enhance trust in research specified in the tripartite setting.

A review of Annual Work Programmes developed over the period validated that the majority of specific research projects to be delivered had clear objectives aligned with the logic towards achieving positive outcomes on policy. Evidence from this review, project case studies undertaken by the evaluation team, and feedback from Eurofound staff suggested that projects considered contentious by the tripartite groups of the Governing Board, such as income after retirement or the posted workers (see case studies), ended up with considerably less clear objectives and scope or were rejected despite having high policy relevance (automatic stabilisers). On the other hand those projects which were not considered to be as contentious, for example NEETs project (see case studies) had a more clearly specified objectives and scope.

<sup>3</sup> The three research areas are: Employment growth and demand and supply of labour in changing labour markets, More and better jobs and higher productivity through partnership, Promotion of social inclusion and sustainable social protection



### Gaps / priorities not covered / Matching the areas of expertise with the challenges, orientation and topics that were selected and implemented

The tripartite governing board selection and approval processes seek to ensure a high level of coverage of priorities for socio-economic policymakers and social partners. There was nevertheless a certain level of re-focusing of the projects once Eurofound made a conscious decision to respond to the financial economic crisis. As a result there may have been some topics selected in 2007-8 that were not fully implemented or did not receive the emphasis they were originally planned to. Another identified area of potential gaps was on the bordering remit with the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health (EU-OSHA). Both agencies attempt to avoid overlap and as a result the themes relevant to both may have been left in 'no-man's-land'. General views of the stakeholders, both on the Governing Board and not, was that the overlap with other EU agencies, including EU OSHA, CEDEFOP or FRA, is on the one hand inevitable and on the other hand so small that it is not a problem.

The Agency had in place collaborative agreements with all EU 'sister' agencies but the formal collaboration rarely extended beyond informing each other's Work Programme during the development and planning stages. There was however a substantial collaboration of an informal nature and some evidence of more formal collaboration such as procurement of sampling of the second ECS in collaboration with EU OSHA. The main barrier to formal collaboration on research projects were administrative complexities involved in joint commissioning. It is important that collaborative projects are introduced only in areas where necessary rather than for the sake of collaboration. Members of the Governing Board perceived that the level of collaboration with the ILO was the most appropriate whilst the links with the OECD were seen as those which required improvement. This perception might be influenced by the specific reference to improve collaboration with international organisations in the 2009-2012 four year Work Programme.

The internal oversight procedures ensured that all approved projects are executed and highlight any problems in execution once encountered. Data stored in the project management system does not allow assessment of which projects did not result in outputs.

### How does the Work Programme preparation (consultation of stakeholders, process etc.) ensure that Eurofound activities/outputs reflect the priorities of the EU socio-economic policy makers and EU social partners?

Work Programme development cycle is an effective and mature process that began over a year prior to final discussions and approval of the draft programme by the Agency's governing board. Stakeholders felt that they were consulted and that their priorities have been reflected in the Work Programme. Individual stakeholders could point at specific projects that addressed their direct needs. Some of them were able to point specifically towards projects that addressed their direct needs. The government representatives highlighted the Stakeholder enquiry service projects and a representative of the European structures the project on 'Green Jobs'.

It was also the first work programme to benefit from collaborative agreements with the other EU agencies and involvement in discussion of their respective four year and annual Work Programmes. The consultations at the time involved external stakeholders and the beginning of the period also included internal brainstorming events on Agency-wide level and symbolic prizes given for the best research idea – one of which was won by the lead researcher behind the most successful NEETs project.

### Methods (methodology, quality assurance, etc)

Eurofound applied a suit of tried and tested methods during the four year Work Programme and continued in the recent trend towards increasing its in-house research capacity. These in combination

with employing standard project management quality assurance practices resulted in high quality outputs receiving relatively high levels of user satisfaction. The core activities of the organisation were based on sound research methods which provide a suitable foundation for comparative analysis and time series in order to identify developing trends both in time and geographical locations. Case studies of projects conducted as part of the evaluation as well as users of the EIRO reports with national member state knowledge indicated variable quality and reliability of data produced by some national correspondents. The main challenge is that often the research managed does not have the member state level knowledge to spot any omissions. Therefore it is not easy to cure this issue simply by giving the research managers opportunity to exercise more contracting power.

#### Communication strategy (target groups (people), products, placement)

The 2009-2012 Work Programme delivered its outputs to the users via established channels specified in the Information and Communication Strategy that was updated in 2006. Throughout the period it was recognised that communication was one of the Agency's key roles. Communication activities have undergone a number of improvements throughout the period, notably in the areas of the packaging of the knowledge and information to be disseminated. In addition to these there were improvements in processes such as the introduction of user satisfaction surveys and close monitoring of downloads of the priority publications in their initial periods after launch.

### Operational Framework

3. Operational framework	Result of the assessment	Need for improvement
To what extent has Eurofound efficiently deployed its resources (human and financial) to achieve the objectives in the 2009-2012 programme?	Eurofound has a <b>good setup for efficient production and delivery of research outputs</b> for its main target groups. Topline indicators suggest increased efficiency but detailed data for a more granular level assessment is unavailable. There is a need for an introduction of a project-focused monitoring system.	<b>Moderate</b>
To what extent are Eurofound's outputs delivered timely for decisions by stakeholders?	There were a number of <b>project delays experienced over the period</b> . Most users and external stakeholders either did not notice or did <b>not</b> consider these being a <b>significant issue</b> . Specific projects require more timely execution.	<b>Moderate</b>
To what extent do Eurofound's structures and processes support the implementation of the [2009-2012] programme and the achievement of its objectives?	<b>Eurofound's structures are well aligned with its objectives</b> . Involvement of key stakeholders from the Governing Board in dissemination of research results is a key factor for realising higher level of policy impact. Varied level of involvement reduces the extent to which they support implementation of the Work Programme.	<b>Moderate</b>

To what extent has Eurofound efficiently deployed its resources (human and financial) to achieve the objectives in the 2009-2012 programme?

The Agency has been operating for over nearly 40 years and therefore it is unsurprising that its operational framework is well setup for production and delivery of new relevant information to its main target groups. There were however a number of characteristics of the monitoring system which prevented the evaluation team from assessing the efficiency of Eurofound at more granular level. Most importantly, the Agency's costs were monitored at the level where projects only consisted of research activities (internal and contracted out) and communications and information as standalone activities. The topline indicators suggest that the Agency ran close to its target budget and with an acceptable level of carry-overs which were reduced over the period, whilst it efficiently increased its internal research capabilities.

In order to implement cost-efficiency/cost-effectiveness into the assessment and decision-making processes Eurofound would be required to implement a more project-focused monitoring system. Such a monitoring system would require attribution of time from both research and communication functions and a strong measurement of outcomes linked to individual publications that can be linked to projects and their costs. There is however a tension between such an approach and the Agency's corporate decision at the time of the 2009-2012 programme to take a thematic-view approach, in light of producing horizontal type publications utilising research from a number of projects which make it nearly impossible to attribute outcomes from such publications to the costs associated to their production. A cost-benefit analysis would require both a precise assessment of the influence of research activity over the course regulatory or legislative change, as well as estimates of the net present value associated with the regulation or legislation in both its counterfactual form and the form it was implemented. As the characteristics of these policies cannot be readily quantified, and there is no realistic counterfactual group of territories that could be realistically constructed, the difficulties involved with such an assessment are intractable

#### To what extent are Eurofound's outputs delivered timely for decisions by stakeholders?

There was evidence from the monitoring information collected by Eurofound and from the case study work that there were a number of project delays experienced over the period. In most cases these delays were not significant and Eurofound staff demonstrated proactive behaviour to solve these challenges. For the majority of users consulted as part of this evaluation these delays were either not noticed or not considered a significant issue<sup>4</sup> (possibly due to the shelf-life of some of the research outputs). There were however a small number of occasions where delays were considered problematic for the users, for example the representativeness studies which are conducted by Eurofound on behalf of the Commission. These delays were due to a number of reasons, including balancing these complex studies alongside other research projects utilising the same capacities – both internally and within the EIRO network; as well as factors not within the control of the agency such as delayed input from the EC. The new project management system put in place in the current Work Programme period should warrant better quality data for delays in delivery and an assessment of whether this shortcoming has been resolved in the current period. With the move towards forward planning and identification of policy hotspots, delivery towards deadlines is of increasing importance.

#### To what extent do Eurofound's structures and processes support the implementation of the [2009-2012] programme and the achievement of its objectives?

Eurofound's structures such as the Governing Board were established to ensure that Agency's activities are well aligned with its objectives. In practice the Governing Board has over the years exercised its powers and its members have a strong feeling of responsibility for assuring that the Agency achieves its objectives. In addition to the formal role, members of the Governing Board are expected to serve as the Agency's ambassadors in their home countries and in many cases distribute the Agency's research outputs within their organisations and beyond. There appears to be a varied level of commitment across the members in fulfilling their intended roles and case study evidence indicates that stakeholder support from the Governing Board members and their levels involvement are one of the key factors for Eurofound's work realising direct policy impact at national levels.

Advisory committees are a crucial component of the internal structure and were considered to have improved in their workings during the period as significant efforts were made to organise them better. Involvement of academics on these committees for challenging projects or even ad hoc setup of meetings with groups of academic experts helped the Agency to gain credibility in disseminating and

---

<sup>4</sup> Though 2011 user satisfaction identified a need for schedule' type alerting system regarding research publications



justifying its results. The largest projects also benefited from data quality assessments which deepened the trust in the data that the Agency produces according to user feedback collected as part of the project-level case studies.

### **Factors increasing likelihood of achieving direct policy impact:**

#### **INCEPTION**

- Having a high ambition and a strong interest in the research topic by the researcher. Support from the Head of Unit and internal organisation buy-in in the project.
- A clear definition of the objectives and scope of the proposed project requiring little or no further validation after approval by the Governing Board. If further validation (e.g. inception workshops with the Advisory Committees) is needed, it should be done as soon as possible to avoid delays from early on.
- Projects with a focus on a pressing societal issues tend to have a higher probability to generate direct impact, especially when research is needed in order to establish (or confirm) terminology and define indicators.
- A novel research question or method of approaching an existing research question (addressing a research gap).
- Setup of the right size project team based on required competencies and abilities to execute the tasks.

#### **EXECUTION**

- (for projects requiring external contractor) Selection of an external contractor knowledgeable in the topic area, with proven track record and ability to deliver on time.
- Effective and early communication within project team and with external experts involved in the project early on in the process in order to flag any expected issues.
- Effective collaboration with advisory committees to receive advice which in turn results in policy-relevant research outputs.
- Using academics to challenge methods at the interim stage of the project to ensure its rigour and obtain ideas on strengthening the approach and gaining credibility.
- Using innovative research methodologies, drawing on a number of sources and involving national level case studies.
- In large complex projects with a large contracted-out component, having the quality of data assessed by an external contractor lead to actions improving the dataset.
- Having a dedicated team which remains largely the same for the duration of the project will reduce any delays resulting from the need to train new team members.
- In cases of cross-unit project teams good communication and regular meetings are key for effective execution of the project.

#### **DISSEMINATION AND IMPACT**

- A highly engaged group of stakeholders and their intensive involvement in consultation and review process ensures high relevance and accessibility of findings. This is especially the case for GB.
- A definitive number (such as a high cost of inaction) as a main finding provides easier presentation of results and is more attractive as a media headline.
- Alignment of research to upcoming policy needs (policy hotspots process).
- Pro-active cross-team coordination and concerted efforts by the directorate, BLO, I&C and research team in dissemination activities.
- Organising pre-publication events that provide early feedback for the draft versions of the report – useful for improving the tone of messages and securing audience buy-in.
- Having a strategic communication plan for a research project (developed in collaboration of the research and communications teams), linking to policymakers' needs extending beyond the end date of the project.

## Recommendations

The European Foundation's four year Work Programmes have been externally evaluated since 2001. The recommendations have rarely been significant in terms of the level of change which has been suggested<sup>5</sup>. At the point of the 2009-2012 Work Programme's implementation the organisation could be considered well versed in operating within a tripartite structure, delivering to its stakeholders, and is known well within the policy environment. As such it is perhaps not surprising that the conclusions drawn from this evaluation process indicate that Eurofound's delivery of the Work Programme broadly met what was expected by its stakeholders; addressed its mandate to a significant extent and that the internal structures were appropriate to supporting its activity under the programme. In many cases areas identified for improvement by this evaluation (as per the Agency's performance during the 2009-2012 period) are already being proactively acted on by the Agency. There are only five recommendations which are not at this point of time acted upon already. This is a modest number in comparison to other evaluations and it signifies the high level of performance to which the Agency has been working in the recent years. Recommendations in this section arose from the evaluation findings and were discussed at an evaluation steering committee meeting to ensure their relevance and ability to be taken forward as actions<sup>6</sup>. That being said they are presented in a form of actionable options rather than prescribed way forward.

The specific recommendations for improvement on which Eurofound are already acting, but still warrant noting, include:

- **Implementation of an activity based budgeting** approach is included in the Agencies' roadmap<sup>7</sup> requirements. This involves development of systems which will allow for full project costs to be analysed. This will enable some level of efficiency assessment to take place. It is however important to ensure attribution of research and communication activities to individual projects which result in outputs. The Agency are currently working on these improvements.
- **Introduction of project management training and a project management system** to ensure consistency of project management delivery within the Agency. Performance during the 2009-2012 period indicated that there was a need to focus more on enabling actual use, and promoting project management excellence (triangle of time, quality, project / resource management). This included encouraging collaborations between units, keeping the project teams to a reasonable size and holding regular meetings of the whole teams so everyone is aware of the timelines. This is in line with the growing emphasis on quality over quantity and the European Commission's roadmap for reducing agency staff by 5-10% by 2020. The Agency are currently working on improvements in this area.

---

<sup>5</sup> External evaluation of Eurofound (2001) organised recommendations on Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Governance and Internal organisation and recommended for example establishment of closer links working with the European Commission and clarification of roles with the Bilbao Agency; Ex post evaluation of the 2001-2004 Work Programme recommended specific operational level recommendations such as systematic collection of feedback from stakeholders, regularly monitoring unit costs of projects and improving evaluation planning of the agency; Ex-post Evaluation of Eurofound – Four Year Work Programme 2005-08 proposed incremental improvements in EPMS, more targeted dissemination and highlighted the necessity to streamline/improve governance aspects; Ex ante evaluation of the 2009-2012 programme proposed a short set of recommendations in Internal and external risks areas, some of which included ensuring flexibility and responsiveness to execute and meet changing needs and ensuring implementation of formal cooperation and partnership development strategy as part of annual work programmes

<sup>6</sup> There was a longer list of recommendations presented at the interim meeting some of which were discussed and not formally included in the final report. For example one such proposition was to dedicate a share of the budget to emerging topics.

<sup>7</sup> [http://europa.eu/agencies/documents/2012-12-18\\_roadmap\\_on\\_the\\_follow\\_up\\_to\\_the\\_common\\_approach\\_on\\_eu\\_decentralised\\_agencies\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu/agencies/documents/2012-12-18_roadmap_on_the_follow_up_to_the_common_approach_on_eu_decentralised_agencies_en.pdf)

- **A rolling action plan to improve the process and meet yearly production of 6 representativeness studies** has been put in place and progress should be reviewed. While it is accepted that representativeness studies are within Eurofound's broader remit, the approach to these studies should be explored re: the possibilities to extend their usefulness beyond single user. The specificity of the well-defined product might not allow such efforts to be successfully implemented.
- **In-sourcing research staff and reduction in quantity but increase in quality were** seen as successful strategies implemented during the period and should be maintained over the next programming period.

There are a number of strategic recommendations which should be considered by Eurofound and on which the Agency has not currently been focusing, these include:

1. **Consider potential options for optimising the level and quality of input from the Governing Board.** In particular it is suggested that actions are taken to:
  - a) *Maximise engagement of the Governing Board members represented at the key meetings and not just the pre-meeting plenary. Systems and procedures both laid out in the founding regulation and additional efforts from Eurofound are thorough (e.g. meeting dates agreed one year in advance and substitutes are available for each representative). However motivation and incentives for Governing Board members shall be reconsidered especially taking into consideration upcoming changes resulting from the update of the founding regulation (one meeting a year) and the roadmap for decentralised EU agencies.*
  - b) *Further incentivise / encourage governing board members to engage on national levels in supporting dissemination of relevant studies to national actors. Case study evidence highlights that this kind of support is key for achieving further impact but it is not happening consistently.*
  - c) *Introduce an approach that can ensure that irrespective of Governing Board discussions that the scope and objectives of projects are limited to what is practically feasible and relevant against the agency's mission in the EU policy context. A solution could be the Director, in his current powers, to have the space to discuss with the Governing Board in order to find operational solutions in a context of mutual trust. It could also be the inclusion of Academic Experts to comment on the project scope for projects which are identified as being particularly challenging (see also recommendation 2). Another approach would be to define objective judgment criteria for what is an acceptable scope and objective for a generic project and publishing the GB decisions.*
2. **Consideration should be given as to how the Agency can build in approaches at key stages in the delivery of the projects to benefit from academic expert involvement.** Evidence of the use of academic expert involvement from the case studies and also from stakeholder feedback suggested that it can have significant benefits in enhancing both the quality of output but also its perception. It was suggested that academic involvement may be useful in particular to independently assess whether a project scope is reasonable within a timeframe, budget and methodology perspective (especially for those projects which are considered controversial in nature). Furthermore involvement of academic experts can benefit Eurofound in terms of further dissemination and wide awareness of the research produced by the Agency.

This recommendation requires careful consideration and exploration of options by which the decision will be made to include an academic panel or not. Lessons are available from the decision to discontinue the existence of the academic board in 2004. It is especially challenging to introduce such an instrument as the current Work Programme planning stage runs to a tight agenda.

3. **Action should be taken to reduce the variability of output generated by national correspondents as this has potential to impact negatively on the quality of the Agency's outputs.** Options for doing so should be considered by the Agency.
4. **Identify areas where formal collaborations and working with the OECD and other international organisations** could take place in the framework of the arrangements in place between the Agency and the Commission with regard to the management of international relations. If working with ILO was particularly seen as appropriate during the time period, it may be relevant to transfer this to working with other organisations.
5. **Identify areas for collaboration with sister agencies, in particular EU OSHA., not only to avoid overlap but also to avoid creating a gap on the bordering remits.** This concern was shared by many Governing Board members and internal stakeholders. The main instruments for communication with sister agencies are directorate level conversations during Work Programme development defined in the collaboration agreements.

Kelly Beaver  
Research and Evaluation Director, Ipsos  
MORI  
Policy and Evaluation Unit  
kelly.beaver@ipsos.com

Andrej Horvath  
Senior Consultant, Ipsos MORI  
Policy and Evaluation Unit  
andrej.horvath@ipsos.com

## For more information

Ipsos MORI  
79-81 Borough Road  
London SE1 1FY

t: +44 (0)20 7347 3000  
f: +44 (0)20 7347 3800

[www.ipsos-mori.com](http://www.ipsos-mori.com)  
[www.twitter.com/IpsosMORI](https://www.twitter.com/IpsosMORI)

### About Ipsos MORI

Ipsos MORI, part of the Ipsos Group, is a leading UK research company with global reach. We specialise in researching Advertising (brand equity and communications); Loyalty (customer and employee relationship management); Marketing (consumer, retail & shopper and healthcare); MediaCT (media and technology); and Social & Political Research and Reputation Research. Over the past 60 years, the UK market research industry has grown in stature and in global influence. The companies that formed Ipsos MORI were there from the very beginning. In the Ipsos MORI story we trace the history of the firm, through its founders and luminaries, to celebrate how we have helped shape the research sector as well as the influences that have made Ipsos MORI what it is today.